and of some of the other varieties of Roman mosaic have been found in this kingdom, as well as in France, Spain, and other countries of Europe, and the British Museum contains several fragments, which, if not exhibiting a refined delicacy of workmanship or design, convey at least a very tolerable idea of the nature of its ruder work, and of its general appearance.

The geometrical construction of most of the Roman tesselated patterns was based usually on the square and circle, up to the time of Alexander Severus, A.D. 220, who, according to Lampridius, introduced a new variety of mosaic into Italy, the materials of which consisted of porphyry and serpentine, and the base of the design of which was ordinarily that of the hexagon and equilateral triangle. As the other, this was of course chiefly used for pavements, and gradually superseded all other varieties of the art; from the time of Constantine down to the fifteenth century, under the name of *opus Alexandrinum*, it was constantly employed as the almost universal ornamental paving of the Italian churches; and, like the cotemporary glass mosaic, its manufacture remained principally in the hands of the Greeks. Two very beautiful examples of *opus Alexandrinum* yet exist in this country, in both cases doubtless the work of Byzantine or Italian artists,—the one in Westminster Abbey, the other in Canterbury Cathedral. We have thus seen that the Italian architects of the middle ages were in the habit frequently of lining the walls and vaults of their churches with pictorial glass mosaic, and the pavements with this precious tesselation; these several adornments serve to complete the decoration of the *fabric* of their buildings, and it remains, therefore, for us only to notice that elaboration of the mosaic art which was devoted, from the fourth century to the fourteenth, to the embellishment of the subsidiary portions of the architecture and church furniture. This consisted of what was called *opus Græcanicum*, that is, a glass mosaic composed of tesseræ or cubes cut to a regular form, and arranged in such geometric combination as to produce, by the contrast of gold and brilliant colours, the most exquisite and complicated patterns in borders, strings, &c.; and these, when inserted in the marble grooves formed in the pulpits, episcopal and regal thrones, twisted columns, ciboria, tombs, and other articles of church furniture, produced the most gorgeous effect, and, through this process of inlaying, the Greek and Italian artists were enabled to carry out, even to the minutest detail, the general character and spirit of that element (mosaic), which formed the basis of their most extended architectural decoration: thus preserving a unity of style, little regarded in the present day, but most fully worthy of imitation.

We have thus briefly endeavoured to run through the leading elements of the art of mosaic considered as a branch of the fine arts, and we shall proceed to offer a few remarks on its value in connection with æsthetic study. To the student in the art of painting its importance is extreme, as it contains almost the only record of his art from the fourth to the thirteenth century. To those engaged in the study of ancient manuscripts it is of value, as it enables them to approximate to dates, and to test styles at which they could scarcely arrive without its aid. To all interested in the history of ancient stained glass its study is important, as, in the earliest examples of mosaic windows, we find exactly the same principle followed out that we trace in the mosaic wall picture; to the enameller its variations are peculiarly interesting, as for centuries the Greeks were almost the only European artists in that branch of the arts, and in their mosaic enamels they only reproduced in a minute form, those works, which on a large scale decorated the walls of their noblest buildings; and last not least, to the architect, it affords the most durable, and probably the most beautiful means of adding to the charms of well-studied and varied form, the graces of colour; it enables him to study the science of polychromy on the largest scale, and through a series of the most fully-developed experiments, and offers to him, in its geometrical character, a form of design almost unparalleled in decorative resources, that harmonizes alike with the severer forms of monumental style, and the more free and graceful peculiarities of domestic and social requirement.

Whether forming an almost imperishable lining to one of the principal vaults in the British senate-house, or inserted in a marble chimney-piece in a drawing-room of even humble pretensions, the writer of this paper ventures to assert, that if its history, peculiarities, and processes be but rightly studied by the designer, it will be found to constitute a graceful embellishment and harmonious addendum.

But the practical architect may naturally inquire where can the "material," the "tesseræ," the "smalto," the bedding, the proper cements, &c., be found; and are our workmen sufficiently instructed to produce such works? To the first question, it can only be replied, that almost every advantage afforded to the ancient mosaic workers in choice of material, &c., is far exceeded by those of the present day. Through the unremitting attention of Messrs. Pether, Prosser, and Blashfield, as designers and inventors, and that of Messrs. Singer, of Vauxhall Bridge-road, and Minton, of Stoke-upon-Trent, as manufacturers, every article necessary for the execution of the most elaborate mosaic work can be provided; and through the admirable mechanical improvements introduced into the manufacture, such means of ease and regularity have been brought to bear upon the powers of production, as to facilitate in no ordinary degree the elaboration of the most extensive works of this nature. I have every reason to believe that Mr. Minton or Mr. Singer have it in their power to produce, at this present time, could patronage be obtained for their execution, as extensive, and probably as beautiful works, as have ever graced the palmiest days of the art; and I am sure, from the interesting specimens exhibited to-night through the kindness of these gentlemen, that the members of this Institute must perceive the capabilities of this too much neglected branch of architectural study.

M. D. Wyatt.

ART; — ITS DISTINCTIONS AND PURPOSES RELATIVELY CONSIDERED.

DECORATIVE-ART SOCIETY.

At a meeting on October 27, the second part of a paper on the above subject was read by Mr. Dwyer. In resuming, he wished it to be understood that his plan of treatment sought rather to embody and classify on broad considerations, than to judge of art in its details. Doubtless many differed from his opinions, and he had found prejudice to be the greatest difficulty to overcome in attaining to a proper estimation of art. We ought not, he said, to rely on a floating opinion, that this work is beautiful, or that commonplace,—this high art, or that low and vulgar: we should not be contented to receive all such dogmas as truth, without attempting to understand why or how far the intentions of art are evident to ourselves. Simplicity with purpose, he said, constitutes perfection in art; and although they are the most rarely developed, they are most readily recognized by a spectator. He then inquired, what constitutes historical art? Is it represented by battle scenes, massacres, processions, or reviews? He was of opinion that, in its true and nobler sense, we ought to find a combination of characteristics in persons, time, and place, harmonizing with the event represented, and associated with mental attributes commanding reverential attention, and exciting an appropriate feeling of emulation in the beholder. It is rarely, he observed, that such *desiderata* are supplied in painting, and the accredited substitutes are too generally mere portraits and gatherings from old prints. The recent exhibition at Westminster Hall, professedly of historical art, would, he said, afford examples to convince us how far these principles have been understood and how applied. The picture of "Alfred inciting the Saxons to prevent the Landing of the Danes," displayed a high purpose,—an attempt to shew in a simple fact what our navy once was, and lead us to respect the man who by his genius improved the defences of our country and laid the foundation for our present commercial greatness. Thus, there appeared much food for a reflective mind. On the other hand, "The Battle of Meeanee" could only excite a feeling of horror, and would, in his opinion, be more fitted for the Horse-guards than a decoration in the new palace at Westminster. In "Richard Cœur de Lion forgiving Bertrand de Gourdon," a moral lesson might be discovered —an embodiment of a noble principle in Christianity; while, on the other hand, "Edward's *generosity* to the People of Calais during the Siege of 1346," was too problematical in such respect. Attention was directed to a scriptural picture relating to the "Seven Acts of Mercy," in which the conditions of sickness, hunger, and the houseless, were expressed through the medium of English associations. This the reader considered praiseworthy, as appealing in English garb to English understandings, and thus rendering art more sympathetically urgent to good moral actions. It would be instructive, he said, for all to examine how much of high art, or rather *high purpose*, has emanated through the royal commission. He inferred, that out of much pretension there may be found a very few good works tending to promote the advancement of art. A more extensive acquaintance with the nature of mental emotions, and a greater variety in mental expressions, were mentioned, as being essentials for progress, and that to portray mental capacity in accordance with the *character* depicted, is the essence, or *high* art, as being beyond the capacity of imitative skill. An example such as "The Last Supper," by Leonardo da Vinci, would, it was said, impress an ordinary spectator, at the first glance, with the natural variety shewn in the whole scene; yet the distinctive expressions of each personification are rendered in consonance with the event depicted.

The *decorations* for the new palace at Westminster, according to the comprehensive system laid down by the Fine-Arts Commission, it was observed, afford an unexampled opportunity to artists for gratifying the desires of all who venerate painting only in its noblest workings. He hoped that the term *decorations* would not continue to be misunderstood, misinterpreted, and restricted in its meaning, as hitherto, by artists in general;—that the time had returned when all branches of the arts would be thought honoured in their application as decorations. He would ask, what had lately been the general estimation of a painting on a wall? why, mere ornamentation. Whereas, if stripped from such a position and framed as a picture, it would have been recognised as of fine art, or high art. Again, he remarked, artistic workings in metal, such as jewellery, would, if in marble, take rank as fine art. These false distinctions, the reader contended, had led to an overflow of followers in certain divisions of art called professional, whilst in others, deemed industrial, an equally evident scarcity prevails. A skilful designer for manufactures, he argued, is as much an artist as the painter of landscapes or portraits, and, in his opinion, the designer required for his purposes abilities both mentally and manipulatively superior to the other. He instanced Holbein, who, as a painter of portraits, imitated admirably, but as a designer, he invented nobly;—Quentin Matsys, who, being recognized by artists, owing to his great abilities as a painter, displayed yet greater genius in his ironwork as a blacksmith; but, had he not painted, his name would not have been remembered by artists. Is it just, it was asked, to estimate art thus by clean hands, as it were? or, is it right to place imitative skill above ideal and constructive genius? It was remarked, that the public requires instruction before sound inferences, upon what constitutes great excellence in the arts, can be popular, or an understanding of the parallels in artistic achievements can be fairly sustained. Successful works in art emanate only from a congenial source, and the taste of a nation must always influence their production. He had been much impressed by the opinion, that whatever is truly great or practically useful is always based upon simplicity, while that which is imperfectly understood is usually overloaded with technicalities. The simple outlines of Greek and Etruscan vases, he observed, have caused, perhaps, more abstruse geometrical investigations into conic sections than even the planetary systems; yet, in his opinion, geometry had not been brought to assist art in their formation. He had prepared a few drawings, which were exhibited, to shew how simply the most refined forms are obtainable. From the beautifully curved outlines of leaves generally, he had been induced to make a few tracings, and he had been greatly sur-

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